

Lesson
10

Fasting—Hungry or Full?

Purpose To instill in class members a desire to seek spiritual growth through fasting and prayer.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Doctrine and Covenants 59:13–14 and the scriptures listed below (in the second preparation item), which give reasons why we fast.
2. Write each of the scripture references below on a separate piece of paper, and then put the papers in a bowl or other container.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:76
Luke 2:37
Alma 45:1
Mosiah 27:22–23
Alma 5:46
Alma 17:3
Alma 6:6
Isaiah 58:6–7
Joel 2:12
3. Materials needed: A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher *Rather than being spiritually uplifted through fasting, many people merely experience hunger. Help class members see that we can become spiritually “full” by preparing, praying, and fasting with a purpose. When we abstain from food and take spiritual nourishment during the fast, the Lord blesses us with his Spirit.*

Suggested Lesson Development **Fasting Is More than Not Eating**

Discussion Ask class members to imagine themselves in the following situation:

You are about to prepare your breakfast one Sunday morning when your mother (or father) comes in and reminds you that it is fast Sunday.

- What are your first thoughts? Are you happy that it is fast Sunday?

Point out that many people think of fasting as just not eating. The only feeling they experience while fasting is hunger. But with proper preparation and observance of the fast, fasting can be a joyful and spiritually uplifting experience.

When and Why We Fast

Scripture activity

Remind class members that one Sunday a month we go without food and drink for two consecutive meals. We also attend fast and testimony meeting, and we (or our parents) make a donation called a fast offering to the bishop to help care for those in need. In addition to the regular fast Sunday, we can also fast any time we feel the need for extra spiritual help, although we do not need to make a fast offering on those occasions.

- Why do we fast?

Have a class member take a piece of paper from the bowl and write on the chalkboard the scripture reference given on the paper. Have all class members find the indicated passage in their scriptures. Then have the class member who chose the paper read the scripture passage aloud and tell what reason it gives for fasting. List the reason on the chalkboard next to the reference. Repeat, giving other class members an opportunity to choose a paper, until all the papers have been used.

Your completed list may look like this:

WHY DO WE FAST?

Doctrine and Covenants 88:76—To obey God’s commandment.

Luke 2:37—To serve God.

Alma 45:1—To worship God and show gratitude to him.

Mosiah 27:22–23—To receive special blessings, such as healing.

Alma 5:46—To gain a testimony.

Alma 17:3—To gain the spirit of prophecy and revelation and the ability to teach.

Alma 6:6—For the conversion of people who are not yet members of the Church.

Isaiah 58:6–7—To feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

Joel 2:12—To draw closer to God.

Discussion

Discuss briefly how fasting can help us do each of these things.

Proper Observance of the Fast

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 59:13–14.

- What do these verses compare fasting to? Do you ever feel joyful when you are fasting?
- What can we do to make fasting joyful?

Accept class members’ answers, then continue the discussion on the following two ways to make fasting joyful: preparation and prayer.

Discussion

Preparation

Write *Preparation* on the chalkboard. Explain that we must plan ahead and look forward to a fast to be able to enjoy it to the fullest.

- What can we do to prepare to fast?

Answers may include praying before beginning our fast, settling our other concerns so we can concentrate on our fast, and deciding to make the fast a meaningful spiritual experience.

Explain that one of the most important ways of preparing to fast is choosing a purpose for fasting.

- What difference can it make when we fast with a purpose? (Having a purpose can make fasting more personal and meaningful. We may find it easier to fast when we are fasting for a specific reason.)

Point out that class members have already discussed some purposes for fasting, and briefly review the list on the chalkboard. Help class members understand that they can fast whenever they need spiritual strength or special blessings for themselves or others. For example, they can fast when they are taking on a new responsibility, such as a Church calling, or when a family member or friend is sick.

Invite class members to tell about purposes for which they have fasted.

Prayer

Write *Prayer* on the chalkboard. Have class members turn again to the scriptures they used to discover reasons for fasting.

- Which of these scriptures include prayer with fasting?
- Why is it important that we pray when we fast?

Explain that some purposes for which we may want to pray as we fast include to ask for strength in fasting, to discuss our purpose for fasting with Heavenly Father, and to thank Heavenly Father for the opportunity to fast and receive the spiritual growth that can come with it.

Invite class members to share experiences they have had with fasting and prayer.

Note to the teacher

Help class members form a positive attitude toward fasting and prayer. Fasting and prayer can become two of the most valuable spiritual tools they will ever acquire. Your testimony and your positive attitude will be two of the most important gifts you give class members this year. (See Teaching—No Greater Call, 171.)

Spiritual Fulfillment through Fasting

Discussion and quotation

Point out that because we are going without food, we may feel physically weak when we fast. However, in other ways fasting can make us stronger.

- What kind of strength do we receive from fasting?

Read or have a class member read the following statement made by Bishop John H. Vandenberg when he was Presiding Bishop:

“Fasting and prayer equip a person with a much greater degree of strength and power than would otherwise be his if he were left to his own devices. Fasting and prayer can bring an individual to a point of humility and faith where the Lord can give him the extra strength and power needed to complete a task or to solve a problem” (“The Presiding Bishop Talks to Youth About: Fasting,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1969, 71).

Testimony

Bear testimony of the spiritual strength and blessings that can be received through fasting and prayer.

Encourage class members to remember preparation and prayer next time they fast, so that they can receive spiritual fulfillment and not just go hungry.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Bring to class a large bowl, enough rocks to fill the bowl, and enough apples to fill the bowl. (You may replace the bowl with any other container and the rocks and apples with two other items.)

Put all the rocks in the bowl. Then ask two class members to fill the bowl with the apples. They will see that they can only fill the bowl with the apples if they first take the rocks out of the bowl.

Have class members read and mark Alma 22:15. Explain that this verse contains the words of a king who repented for rebelling against the Lord. The king offered to give up his kingdom and all his possessions in order to receive the Spirit of God (the Holy Ghost).

- What did the king really need to give up to feel the Spirit? (See Alma 22:18.)

Point out that just as the rocks needed to come out of the bowl before the bowl could be filled with apples, the wickedness in the king needed to leave before the king could be filled with the Holy Ghost.

- What do we need to do to be filled with the Holy Ghost? (We need to rid ourselves of unrighteous thoughts and actions.) How can sincere fasting be one way to “empty” ourselves of unrighteousness so we can be filled with the Holy Ghost?

Explain that even though our stomachs are empty when we fast, we can be filled with the Holy Ghost. Being hungry for food when we fast is not wrong, especially if it reminds us to “hunger and thirst after righteousness, [so we can] be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6).

2. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) is available, show “The Law of the Fast,” a four-minute segment.

3. Copy the handout at the end of this lesson and cut it into strips as indicated.

Write the following names on the chalkboard:

Ahasuerus = king

Esther = queen

Mordecai = Esther's cousin

Haman = wicked prime minister

Pass out the story strips at random. Have class members try to put the strips into the correct sequence of events, placing them on a table or the floor.

When they have finished, briefly review the story, emphasizing Esther's request that the other Jews fast with her before she went in to the king to plead for the lives of her people (see Esther 3–8).

- How do you think it helped Queen Esther to have her people fast with her?
- How might it help you to have your family or friends fast with you?

Esther, a Jewish woman, was Queen of Persia and Media. She was afraid for her people because they were condemned to die. The wicked prime minister Haman had

deceitfully convinced King Ahasuerus that the Jews in his kingdom were wicked and should be put to death. The king did not know his wife was a Jew. Haman persuaded the king to kill all Jews because a Jew named Mordecai refused to

bow down to him. Mordecai was Esther's cousin and had raised her from the time her parents had died. He asked

Queen Esther to persuade her husband, King Ahasuerus, to reverse his decision to put the Jews to death. Even for the queen, however, it was dangerous to

speak to the king. Anyone approaching the king without having been summoned would be put to death unless the king indicated his approval by

lowering his scepter. Knowing this, Queen Esther said to Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and

fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I

perish" (Esther 4:16). After three days of fasting, Esther summoned her courage and faith in the Lord and entered the king's throne room. When the king saw Esther, he smiled and lowered his scepter toward her. Esther asked the king to

attend a banquet. At the banquet she asked him to spare her life and the lives of her people. When the king realized how Haman had deceived him into condemning the Jews to death, he sentenced Haman to be

hanged. Mordecai was made prime minister in Haman's place, and the king made a decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against those who wanted to hurt or kill them. To this day Jewish people all over the world celebrate this event and honor Queen Esther.